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April 12, 2013

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Dr. Rebecca Blank
Deputy Secretary of Commerce
Herbert C. Hoover Building
14th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Blank:

Thank you your service over the last several years at the Department of Commerce. I wish you well as you leave Commerce to become the Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison later this summer.

Yesterday, during the Subcommittee's hearing on the Department of Commerce FY 2014 budget request, we discussed the number of senior level vacancies at the Department, including the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary once you depart in a few months, the Census Director, the heads of PTO and NOAA, and the Department's Chief Financial Officer. These positions have been vacant for months, some since last summer, including the Secretary and Census Director. While I have confidence in the staff temporarily filling those positions, I urge you to prompt the White House to expeditiously appoint persons to these important positions. I would also suggest that these positions might be better filled with career employees to ensure continuity of leadership as Administrations change and to minimize vacancy durations.

Finally, we also discussed the National Weather Service (NWS) and I reminded you about a letter I had sent you on March 5, 2013, stating that the Committee would consider on an expedited basis a reprogramming should the NWS need additional funds during FY 2013 as a result of the sequester. As we approach summer severe storm season, I urge you to ensure that the NWS has the funding necessary to adequately forecast the weather.

Please notify me immediately at (202)225-5136 should a reprogramming become necessary to ensure that these vital services are not interrupted.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies

THIS IS IMPORTANT